

GOD IS

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The Greek alpha (*a*) is often employed as a prefix to negate the idea of a word or to express the absence of quality. We call this form *privative alpha*. The apostle Paul uses the *privative alpha* with certain words to indicate what God is by declaring what God is not. This creates an interesting way to study the nature of God.

To know God is the ultimate quest of the human heart. We must first learn about God before we can properly reverence and worship Him. One of the problems that we are encountering in the religious world today is the absence of an understanding of the majesty of God. Our worship has been corrupted because it is centered upon the flesh rather than the Spirit. We are focused on ourselves rather than God. We have profaned the sacred in order to satisfy our own lusts. When we fail to understand who God is, we drift toward paganism. A proper knowledge of God is the beginning of true wisdom.

God Is Incorruptible/Immortal

Paul declares, “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (Rom. 1:23--KJV). The word of interest in this text is uncorruptible or incorruptible. The Greek word is *aphthartou* from *aphthartos*. It is formed using *a*, negative and *phtheirō* meaning “to destroy by means of corrupting and so bringing into a worse state” (W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, I, 242). *Aphthartos* is an adjective and means incorruptible, immortal, imperishable, undying, enduring (Wigram, *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 61). Thayer adds the thought, “not liable to corruption” (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 89). *Aphthartos* is found in six passages in the New Testament, but only two refer to God (Rom. 1:23 and I Tim. 1:17). Man is

corruptible, God is not. Man is of the flesh, God is not. God is spirit. As spirit, God is not subject to decay, thus indicating never ending life. Idols are made of corruptible things such as wood, silver, or gold. God is not. Idols can be destroyed. God cannot be destroyed. Paul uses this word again in I Tim. 1:17, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” The Greek word for immortal is *aphthartō(i)*. I Tim. 1:17 is an ascription of praise to God (a doxology). The doxologies in the New Testament contain three or four parts. The person designated and praised; the statement of praise itself; a conclusion indicating the eternal duration of the praise; and an *amen* indicating the veracity of the statement (George Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 104). God is described as a king, eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise. The word *immortal* means that God is not subject to destruction. He is imperishable.

Another word for immortal, applied to God, is *athanasia*. This word is found in I Tim. 6:16. It is formed with *a*, negative and *thanatos* meaning death. It literally means deathlessness. (Vine, II, 249). Lenski states, “The very word *athanasia* is, however, derived from the negative human condition called death. He (God,--DS) is the opposite to us. The more positive designation would be “life,” but this in the absolute sense” (*Interpretation of Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 725).

God Is Invisible

In I Tim. 1:17, Paul uses the word *aorataō(i)* which is translated *invisible*. This word expresses the fact that God cannot be seen, i.e. He is invisible (Thayer, 53). It is formed using *a*, negative and *horaō* meaning to see (Vine, II, 269). *Aoratos* is an adjectival form occurring five times in the New Testament. I Tim. 1:17 and Heb. 11:27 refer to the invisible God. The passage in Hebrews states, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured,

as seeing him who is invisible.” The passage speaks of Moses’ faith in God in the midst of adverse circumstances. Faith is the *evidence of things not seen* (Heb. 11:1). Moses made choices, acted and was steadfast because of his faith in God. Once again, comparison should be made to idols. Idols can be seen and are intended to be seen. God is invisible. This requires man’s faith to embrace the spiritual.

God is Unsearchable

In Romans 11:33, Paul uses the word *anexeraunēta* from *anexereunētos* meaning unsearchable, or inscrutable (Wigram, 28). Vine breaks this word down into its various parts: *a*, negative; *n*, euphonic, *ex (ek)*, out, *eraunaō* to search, examine, (Vine, IV, 174). The passage declares, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” God’s ways are not able to be traced out. Paul is speaking generally. Obviously, God has made Himself known to man in such a way that he (man) can know what He (God) has revealed. However, this revelation does not exhaust all that God is or that He has done. We must admit our own limitations. We must not limit God. For example, only recently has man mapped the human genome. There is still much that we do not know as we make every effort to trace the creative steps of Almighty God! But, alas, God’s ways cannot be traced out (*anexichniastoi*). *Anexichniastos* is an adjectival form akin to *ichneuō*, to trace out (*ichnos*, a footprint, a track) (Vine, IV, 174). The only other passage in the New Testament where this word occurs is Eph. 3:8 where Paul refers to the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” A clear example is given by Paul. Regarding the love of Christ, Paul affirms that the human mind strives to know more about the love of Christ but will never exhaust that knowledge. He states, “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge...”

(Eph. 3:18,19). This is a paradox! How can we know that which passeth knowledge? We can know and we are ever gaining in knowledge of the love of Christ, but we will never exhaust such knowledge!

God Is Unapproachable

In I Tim. 6:16, Paul writes, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” The Greek word *aprositon* means *unapproachable*. It is formed using *a*, negative and an adjective formed from *proseimi* meaning to go to (Vine, I, 71). It is found only here in the New Testament. It is translated *which no man can approach unto* in the KJV. Paul is speaking of the radiant glory of God (the Godhead). “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,” I John 1:5. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world,” John 8:12. This unapproachable light is uncreated, eternal, and not the light that was called into being on the first day of creation (see Lenski, 726). This light is the infinite glory of the eternal God. The intensity of this light is so great that man cannot approach unto it. This is an obvious reference to the limitations of the physical aspects of man’s being, attempting to behold the infinite glory of God. After we have put on immortality and are in a spiritual body, we shall behold Him (I John 3:2).

God Is Unchangeable

The Greek word *ametathetos* is found in Hebrews 6:17 and 18. The word is formed with *a*, negative and *metatithēmi*, to change (Vine, II, 249). It occurs as a noun in verse 17 and an adjective in verse 18. The passage affirms, “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” The two immutable things are

the promise and the oath (Heb. 6:13, 14). The truthfulness of what God promises is established by His very nature. It is impossible for God to lie. The promise God made to Abraham relates to our salvation from sin and our eternal redemption through Christ. The hope that we have in Christ is firmly established, being anchored in God's veracity and integrity. God not only speaks the truth, but He also has the power to make it come to fruition. The promise of God and the power of God guarantee the spiritual outcomes of comfort, joy and peace for all those who believe and obey His holy Word.

God is knowable! We must know God in order to understand ourselves as His creatures. We can find meaning and purpose in life only by knowing the true and living God. Life itself is futile without God. We must know God in order to render unto God the proper respect and honor due His name. God is to be praised, glorified and adored by us. A proper understanding of who God is keeps us from idols and from the unholy acts that accompany them. John's words are an appropriate ending to these thoughts, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (I John 5:20, 21).